

Pesticide Safety *Information*

Worker Health and Safety Branch

Series N

N-7

LAUNDERING PESTICIDE CONTAMINATED CLOTHING FOLLOWING USE OF NONAGRICULTURAL PESTICIDES

General Information:

This leaflet provides information about removing pesticide residues with non-commercial laundry machines. The clothing of other family members may become contaminated, if pesticide-contaminated clothing contacts other clothing in the wash. In addition, persons handling that clothing may get pesticides on their skin if not properly protected. If you follow the information in this guideline pesticide exposure of persons doing the laundry and their family should be minimized.

California pesticide worker safety regulations require employers to provide clean coveralls for each employee who handles pesticides (mixes, loads, applies, and repairs or cleans pesticide-contaminated equipment) with the signal word "Warning" or "Danger." Coveralls are a one- or two-piece garment that covers the body except for head, hands and feet. Your employer must ensure that you wear clean coveralls at the start of each work day and change out of that clothing and wash at the end of the work day when you handle pesticides with the signal word "Danger" or "Warning". You should not take potentially contaminated coveralls home. If your work day does not involve a return to your headquarters, you must:

- remove your contaminated coveralls at work
- store them in a sealable container outside your living quarters
- return them to the employer.

Always store contaminated personal protective equipment (PPE) separately from clean coveralls. It is your employer's responsibility to provide for the washing of coveralls, and to inform the person doing the laundry that the clothing may be contaminated with pesticides and should be washed separately.

Normal work clothing (even under coveralls or other PPE) can become contaminated with pesticides. In addition, your clothing may be contaminated if you work around treated plants or lawns. When washing any pesticide contaminated clothing with home laundry equipment, do it in a manner that prevents exposure of family members to unwashed clothing or the rinse water.

If you spill very toxic pesticide concentrate on your clothing, take them off immediately. Do not launder; dispose of the clothes according to state and local laws. Throw away leather items contaminated with pesticides; they cannot be adequately cleaned. Wash contaminated clothing as soon as possible.

Laundering Contaminated Clothing:

Consider the following measures when washing pesticide-contaminated clothing at home.

Precautions and Personal Protection.

- Wear rubber gloves when handling contaminated clothing.
- Keep all contaminated clothing in closed plastic bags outside the house, out of the reach of children and pets, until ready to wash.
- DO NOT put in the family laundry basket.
- Multiple washings of clothing may be necessary if contaminated with extremely toxic pesticides.
- Wash hands immediately after handling pesticide contaminated clothing.

Loading the Washer.

- Wash contaminated clothing separately from the rest of the family laundry.
- If possible, use a separate washer.
- Dump contaminated clothing directly into the washer from the plastic bag.
- Keep the washing area well ventilated.

Load Size.

- Place only a few pieces of clothing into the washer at one time.
- It will help ensure good agitation.

Pre-rinse.

- In an automatic washer, allow the washer to agitate and spin the first wash water out in order to dilute pesticide and increase removal.
- Then run through the full wash cycle.
- If your washer doesn't have a pre-soak cycle, run clothing through the wash cycle twice.

Water Level.

- Set the washer to the extra large or large load setting to flush clothing thoroughly and dilute any pesticide present.

Water Temperature.

- Use the HOT water setting.
- Hot water increases pesticide removal.

Wash Cycle.

- Use the LONGEST wash cycle.
- A double rinse is recommended.

Detergent.

- Use a HEAVY-DUTY liquid or powdered detergent as recommended on the package.
- If there is a stain, use a prewash stain and soil remover. Remember to use rubber gloves when handling clothing.

Water Hardness.

- Hard water can deactivate detergent, and thus can affect pesticide removal.
- Use a mechanical water softener in areas with hard water.

Additives.

- Neither bleach nor ammonia seems to affect removal of most pesticides.
- Never use both, since this combination forms a highly toxic gas.

Cleaning the Washing Machine.

- After laundering pesticide-contaminated clothing, clean the washing machine.
- Run it empty through a complete cycle, using hot water and detergent.

Drying.

- Line drying is the preferred method.
- It will prevent contamination of the dryer, and the sunlight may also help degrade any remaining pesticide residues.
- When using a dryer, run it until the clothing is completely dry.
- After drying, run the empty dryer for about 10 minutes.

Tips for Reducing Pesticide Exposure of Family Members:

- Remove contaminated clothing at the work site and put in plastic bags.
- Empty pockets and cuffs at the work site.
- Shower at the end of the work day. Use clean water and soap.
- Inform the person doing the laundry at home that the clothing is pesticide-contaminated and how to launder it.

REMEMBER: It is your employer's responsibility to wash contaminated coveralls and other PPE that he provides to you to use on the job.